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# Chapter 1: The Hopi Nation in 1980

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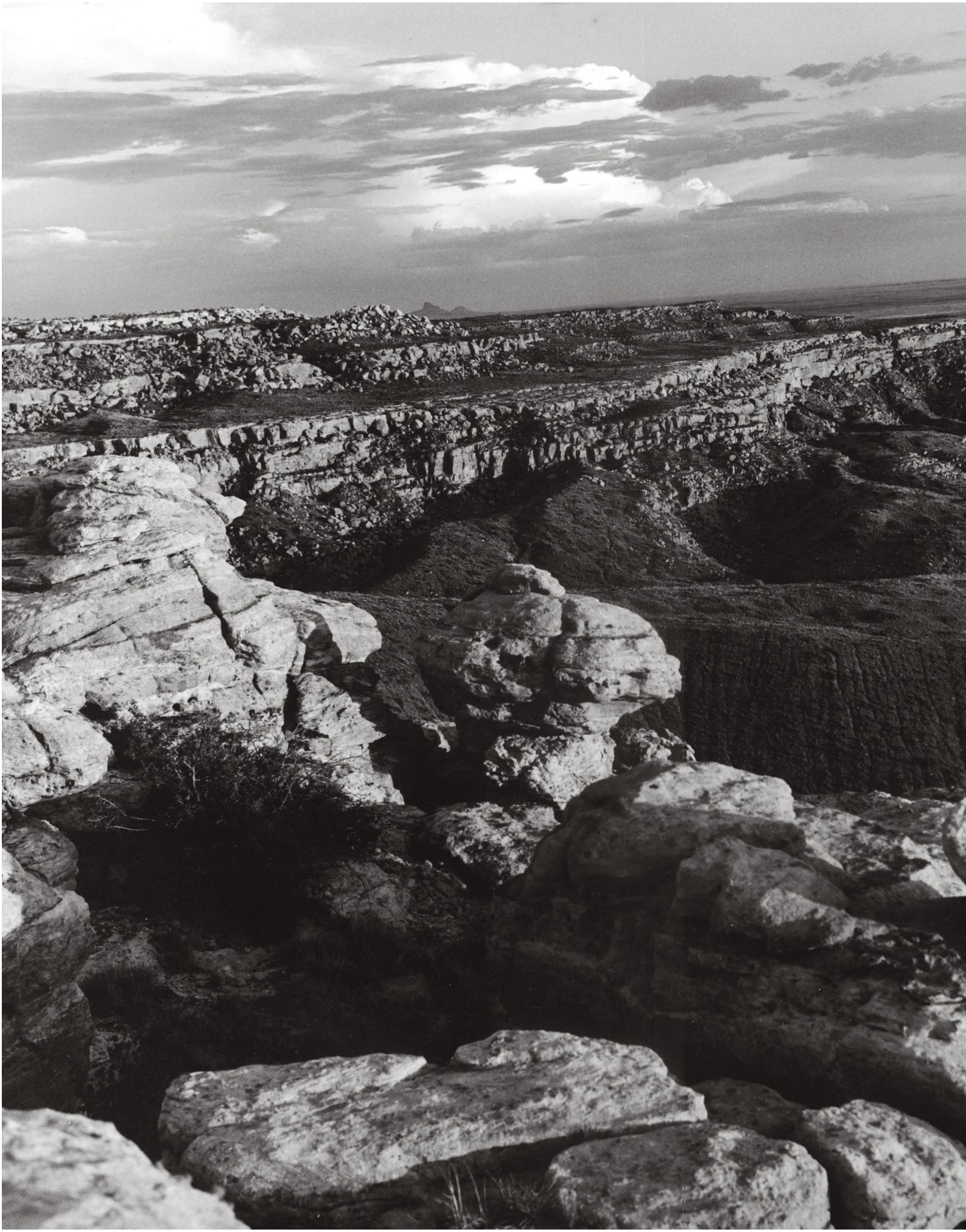

CHAPTER 1

# The Hopi Nation in 1980

Abbott Sekaquaptewa

"It is a time to recall and to revitalize the good things of Hopi life and to celebrate Hopism."

The Hopi Tricentennial Year is probably one of the most significant and important events in contemporary Hopi life because it has relevance to every facet of Hopi life and will hopefully retain that relevance in the future. It is a time to recall and to revitalize the good things of Hopi life and to celebrate Hopism.

The Hopi people have retained their cultural life to perhaps a greater degree than most Indian peoples in the United States today. Customary practices which govern the pattern of life from birth to death for most Hopi are still carried out to a large extent.

The Hopi mesas are located in northeastern Arizona in the plateau country where the Hopi clans began gathering a millennium ago. The clans were not strangers to the land at that time, for many had passed through this country during the migration period after the arrival from the other world. This was a predestined place, a chosen place, where they were to come together and settle while awaiting the return of the white brother. Presently there are approximately 9,000 Hopi living on the reservation established in 1882.[1] The original tract of land set aside for the use and occupancy of the Hopis comprised 2,500,000 acres. Due to encroachment by other Indians and the failure of the federal government to protect the land rights of the tribe, it has been reduced today to 1,500,000 acres, two-thirds of which is still occupied by

Figure 4. THE HOPI LAND
Owen Seumptewa, photograph, 1981 (Courtesy of the photographer, Second Mesa, Arizona)

members of the Navajo tribe.[2] This seems like a large tract of land, and is perhaps comparable to the King Ranch in Texas. When the nature of the land is considered, however, it also appears very harsh and a difficult place for anyone to make a living. This is the land of the Hopi where the people came, knowing that it was a chosen place where Hopi society was once more to bloom.

According to the tradition of the separation of the Hopi and his white brother, it was agreed that both would strive for the source of life, the point of the rising sun, and whoever reached it first would inherit great knowledge. They were to know when one or the other had reached the source of life by the appearance of a great star. Upon seeing the star, the brother still in migration would settle in the place where he was located at that time and await the other brother. So it was that when the great star appeared, the ancestral people settled on the mesa and awaited their white brother. Experts estimate that the permanent settlement of the Hopi mesas began somewhere around 1000–1050 A.D. The first supernova, the Crab Nebula, appeared in the western hemisphere in the year 1054 A.D., approximately the same time that the Hopi ancestral peoples saw the great star and settled to await their white brother.[3] This leads one to believe that there is much significance and validity to the traditions and history of the Hopi people.

Many people still believe that Hopis have always been one people. In fact, our ancestors were different groups, similar in nature, but each with its own history, tradition and priesthood authority for the performance of the rituals which they possessed. The elders teach us that in the beginning there was one group with one language, but as the migrations began, the clans separated, spreading out over the face of the land. Different languages and lifestyles developed, but the various groups knew that they were to come together once more at the designated time.

When the clans gathered on the mesas, they organized their ritual ceremonies into a complete ceremonial calendar comprising a whole year of four seasons. Each clan, even those which did not possess any priesthood authority, was given a role in the new society, and it was the clan which became the most important foundation block of Hopi society.[4] One belongs to one's mother's clan, and if in line for an important priesthood position, inherits it from a maternal uncle or older brother. The line of succession does not pass from father to son, because the father is from another clan and therefore from another family.

The Hopi are an agrarian people who have developed a very sophisticated ritual ceremonial system. There is a ritual for every important phase of life in Hopi society, from birth to death. At birth a Hopi child's paternal grandmother and paternal aunts come and take care of the baby. Each day they touch, bathe and talk to the child. At birth, the child is given a mother ear of corn, representing the earth mother. This is kept close to the baby, wrapped in its covers, and in this way, environmental sensitivity begins from the moment of birth. The constant attention given the baby by the immediate and extended family provides the family security that becomes so all important in later life, as well as the security of a ritual place in Hopi society.[5] For the baby's first twenty days, its mother is not allowed to eat salt or any protein because our earthly bodies are saline in nature and therefore symbolic of our mortality and corruptibility. At the end of the twenty days, both the mother and child are given a hair washing, and the immediate and extended family ritually touch the child for the last time until marriage. The baby is given a name based on the clan affiliation of the father, which serves to involve the family of that line.

The child is named by the paternal aunts and because there may be a number of aunts, the child may be given numerous names.[6] At sunrise on the twentieth day, the child is shown to the rising sun, the names that it has received are repeated, and a prayer offering is made to start the child on its life way. This ritual is repeated at least two more times during the life of the child. It is repeated at the kachina initiation at which time the child is given either, a ceremonial father or mother as the case may be, expanding the relationship of the immediate family to other clans. In this way the entire Hopi society remains one big family.

This becomes very complicated and confusing to non-Indians or non-Hopis or even to some Hopis who are not being raised in all the intricacies of the Hopi way, because the terms of the relationships utilized depend on the occasion or on preference. Familial relationships are important because the way in which we relate to each other is dependent to a large extent on how we consider ourselves related. In the settlement of family problems, for instance, relationships with uncles might be the most important because uncles possess the authority in such matters. The question of inheritance of property might bring one to another relationship.

One exception to the importance of these familial relationships is in the succession to office which is restricted to one clan only. If, in unusual circumstances, a non-clan member is appointed to a high priesthood position, he serves a four-year term of office.[7] The person who holds the position as a right of his clan, on the other hand, can hold it for life. Following the ceremony for induction into the priesthood societies, men are once again given a name which becomes permanent. At that time they also become subject to accountability under the divine law of the Hopi Nation.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this process, as indicated earlier, is the family relationships that provide the individual with a place in society as well as a role and function and purpose, that becomes the source of dignity and pride for that individual. Again, for example, the high priest position in the Snake Dance is the right of the Snake Clan people,[8] and the priest position for the Flute Dance is the possession of the Flute Clan people.[9] These clans perform their ritual functions in society as a whole as their contribution to life. This provides Hopis a very strong pride in their history, position, and in the religious rites that commemorate historic events in the history of their clans and the people as a whole. They have the security and the knowledge that they have a purpose in life, and therefore they have a dignity as a people.

A very orderly system is in process constantly into adulthood and the induction into the priesthood and priestess societies. At the same time, economic life impresses its own importance upon the growing person, and the significance of the natural environment is stressed. Therefore, Hopis learn to live within their environment while at the same time gaining the security of a place in society. Because of the closeness to the earth mother and the long history of obtaining sustenance from nature, there is a traditionally strong attachment and respect for the natural environment so important to the stability of the people. Such is the life of the people that the Tricentennial is intended to celebrate and such was the life of the old people when the first white man arrived in 1540.

It might seem that it would have been better that the whites never came, yet it was the covenant that Indians and Hopis had with the white brother that they would come together at another time. Hopis did not know whether these were the correct white brothers or not, but they were accepted. As it turned out, these whites, the Spanish, suppressed the freedom of the Hopis by denying them the right

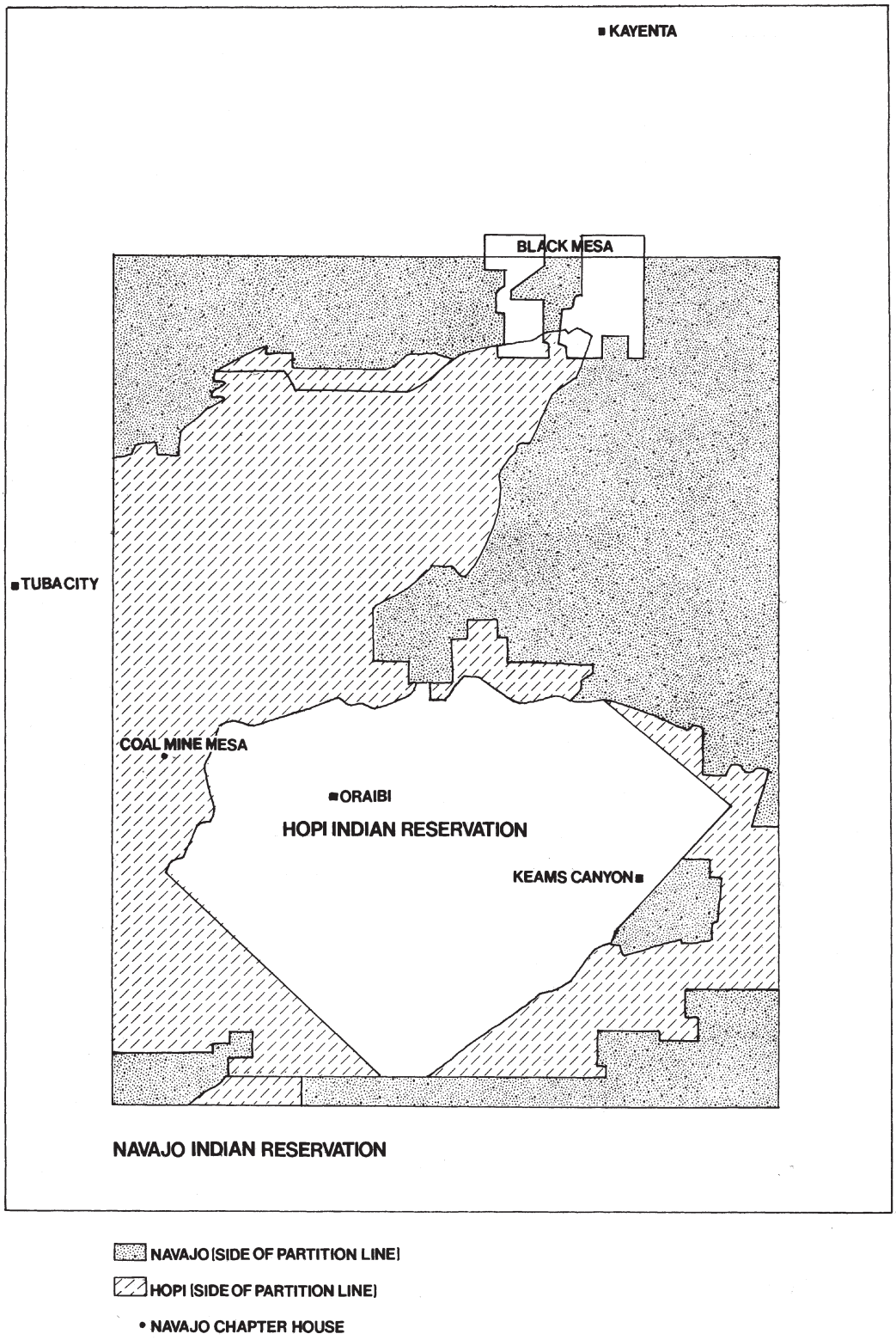


Figure 5. HOPI AND NAVAJO DISPUTED LANDS
Keith Owens, graphic artist and mapmaker, 1982, Lubbock, Texas

to practice their beliefs and to carry on their rituals. Hopis became subject to an authority located far across the ocean and their persons were repeatedly violated. It was inevitable that something would happen which was foreign to the nature of the people.

On August 10, 1680, the people resorted to violent measures to overthrow the crown of Spain and regain their independence. They re-established society as it had existed before. Today, in midwinter at the Soyal ceremony, the beginning, of new life is celebrated. New growth in crops and plant life are celebrated in early spring at the Powamu ceremony, and the abundance of crops and the fullness of life are celebrated in song and dance in late summer. Having been re-established in the past three centuries, these ceremonies serve to provide that stability to the Hopi people that has enabled them to survive somewhat better than some of their brothers and sisters across the continent.

Many stresses to Hopi traditional life are evident today. One of the biggest problems confronting Hopis in contemporary life is loss of language.[10] Because knowledge of language is necessary to understand the history, the traditions, and the religious concepts of the people, the situation has become very critical. Today there are many young Hopi children who are subjected to the impact of television, the bright lights of peripheral towns, and many other influences which erode home instruction and take away the good life learned in our own language. What is to be done? Will it be bilingual education in schools or should instruction be confined to the family and to the child's cultural environment? Whose responsibility is it?

Many people are concerned about the taking away of the family responsibility for language and culture instruction, because that erodes the strength of the family. One of the challenges that we face today in this tricentennial period is the ending of some of the priesthood societies and the functions of those societies in some of the villages. Although they are still active in a number of villages, they have become non-functional in others, and this takes away the established and tried system for teaching young adults the basic beliefs and the history and the traditions of the Hopi way.[11]

The understanding of the concepts of accountability to Hopi society, to humankind and to the environment is inherent in the teachings given when a young man attains the priesthood, so it becomes a concern to us today. The question might be asked: Can the priesthood societies, once lost, be reinstated? If not, what provisions have been made for a world without the vital support system of a priesthood society as we know them? And are they compatible to modern life pressures?

Today there is controversy over the "legality" of reviving priesthoods in some of the villages because there is a question about the validity once they have become non-functional. In Hopi belief there are penalties for practice without divine authority according to traditional law. In mid-March of this year, some of the ritual ceremonies at one of the villages were closed to outsiders by the new leader on that mesa. This is disheartening. One of the teachings of the elders is that the priesthood leaders and the chieftain must hold all of their people whom they regard as their children unto themselves; they cannot push one away. All the people that walk the face of this earth are their children. So, there is controversy and disagreement over the closing of ceremonies to non-Hopi people.

Another facet of this problem is the difficulty of occupancy and maintaining offices of high priests under the pressures of easy, modern life, because the life of priests and high priests is a life of meditation and personal sacrifice which is a law unto them. Also a problem is the emphasis placed on politi-

cal power and leadership rather than spiritual leadership. That is becoming apparent among the leaders of the younger generation and newer traditional leaders.[12] This is inconsistent with the teachings of the elders and represents disrespect on the part of contemporary young leaders who seem to want to exercise political power where before it did not exist. So the question is: Can the old concept of spiritual leadership for the benefit of all peoples survive in the modern world that demands strong political leaders? Because pressure corrupts the purpose and the role of traditional leaders, the pressures of modern society make it difficult for these people.

Another problem facing contemporary Hopi society is the question of land use patterns. Because the tribe has grown so rapidly in the past generation or two, there is a great need for homes.[13] Yet the land close to the Hopi mesas has traditionally been held and controlled by the different clans or by the priesthood. Not every Hopi has the right to use that land. Consequently, there are problems with the clan leaders over the use of land for private purposes. The question arises: At the time when the clans began gathering and were assigned farmland by their leaders, did they gain the right to own this land or did they merely gain the right to have use of that land? Thus, there is controversy over use of the ancient lands in contemporary Hopi society.

Because the world today has its own way of doing things, its own value system, and its own outlook, the Hopi Nation has established regulatory ordinances, some of which have been made necessary by outside pressures or by other cultures, such as the Navajo people and the white peoples. Because in this new society there are laws that say all people must be treated equally, Hopis run into the problem of federal civil rights laws that have been established in recent years. Although it was our purpose to establish regulatory ordinances to protect our rights and our interests, the civil rights laws will not permit us to use them without applying them to ourselves. Applying these laws to a society that has always existed without restrictive laws governing everyday life and to a people who are only controlled by the laws of their natural environment and traditional culture is most difficult. This is going to be one of the greatest challenges to us in the world today and during this tricentennial period.

How much regulation should there be? And what does it do to our people? In the old life, Hopis were free to gather many materials for our living and ceremonial purposes. This cannot be done today. Some laws were established to prevent the wasteful use of the resources of this land,[14] but these statutes also take away our rights to gather things important to us, because they are classified as an endangered species or are contrary to an environmental statute.

There is great controversy over the development of the natural resources of the reservation such as coal.[15] Hopis are taught that although the Hopi country is a harsh land, underlying it is great wealth that is there for us to gain sustenance.

The question is not, then, whether or not the natural mineral resources should he developed from the land; the question is how to go about doing that and still maintain the dignity of our mother earth and protect her and give her an opportunity to provide for us as she always has done throughout our existence.

The conscience of the non-Indian public in this country has also become a very important concern in our contemporary life. On first inspection, this would appear to be to our benefit. However, we are finding out that because of the conscience of the non-Indian people in this country over the handling of Indian affairs, a situation has arisen where the federal government and United States courts will

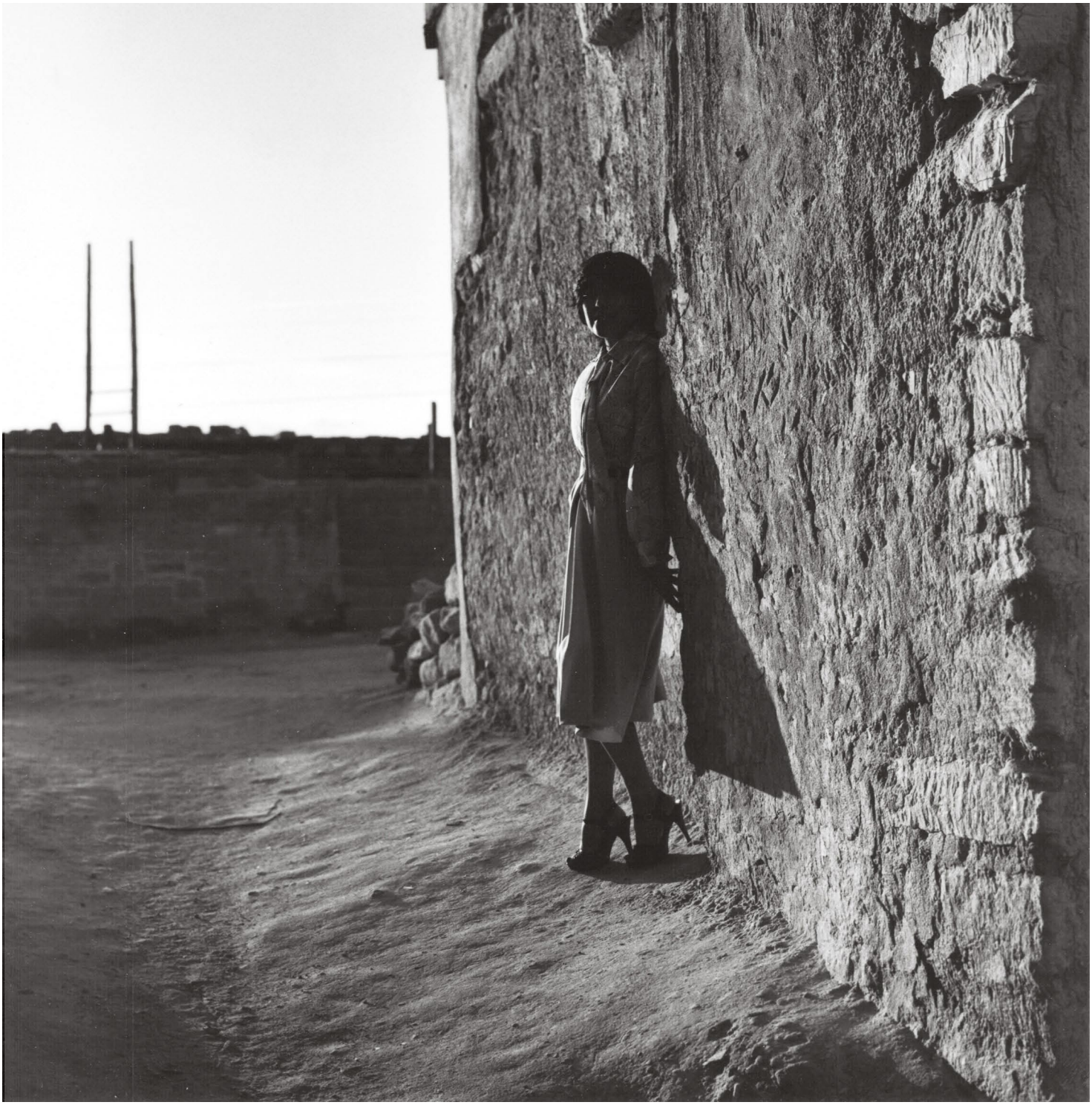

Figure 6. HOPI ENVIRONMENT
Owen Seumptewa, photograph, 1981 (Courtesy of the photographer, Second Mesa, Arizona)

not take positive action to protect the land interests of the Hopi people from those who encroach, who sometimes happen to be other Indians. Because enough has been done to the Indians, there is a reluctance to enforce any law on other tribes, and we lose as a result.

However, what still exists in Hopi society today can be revitalized because the Hopi way gives a quality of life, a life purpose, and a meaning for existence that seems to be missing from the greater society. It is important to note that the extended family system, the clan, which makes the people a whole, provides the stability so greatly needed in this world today. The concept of respect for the natural environment where we belong to the earth and the land rather than the land and earth belonging to us is also important.

The people, our Hopi people, have something to contribute to today's society. And that contribution is our knowledge and the good things of our way, the Hopi way, to this world. That is the significance of the Hopi Tricentennial, year and era. As the elders say, we are all their children and our well-being is the single most important instruction that they have been given by the giver of the breath of life. The people did not come into existence on this land. The Hopi came from another place, from another world. We are the first people and we came here because life was not good anymore in that other world. Because of this awareness of the beginning of life on this continent, the people feel a responsibility to life and to the subsequent accountability to life. Also known was that evil had come with the people. This world would become corrupt, and it would reach the state once more that it had in that other world. Since the Hopi elders possess the priesthood authority and similar authority over mother earth, they became the stewards, and we were taught that they would find our way for us if we were to be faithful. Fortunately, many Hopi people are faithful, and it is for this reason that the significance of the Tricentennial is not only the gaining once again of our independence in 1680 to be free as children of our earth mother, but rather to celebrate the fact that the Hopi are able today to contribute to society as a whole. That is the commemoration that we have established for ourselves as the Tricentennial, the Hopi Year. Working together and living together, this fullness can be achieved which has been taught to the people for generations and generations, and hopefully will be passed on to the children for many generations to come.

## Notes

1. Census counts taken in 1890–91 for the three Hopi mesas were as follows:

| FIRST MESA | | SECOND MESA | | THIRD MESA | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Walpi | 232 | Shungopavi | 225 | Oraibi | 903 |
| Hano | 161 | Shipaulovi | 126 | | |
| Sichomovi | 103 | Mishongnovi | 244 | | |
| | TOTAL | 1,994 | | | |

Thomas Donaldson, *Moqui Pueblo Indians of Arizona, Extra Census Bulletin 11* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Printing Office, 1893), p. 38. The Chairman states that today there are approximately 9,000 Hopi living on the reservation, somewhat above 1980 Census estimates of 8,500. The 1970 Census shows 4,404 Hopis living on reservation lands. This discrepancy is not surprising considering the past undercounts of Native Americans by the United States Census. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *United States Census of Population: 1970, 1980, Subject Populations, American Indians.*

2. Jerry Kammer, *The Second Long Walk: The Navajo–Hopi Land Dispute* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1980). This issue was subsequently resolved with federal legislation.

3. Frank H. Cushing, "Origin Myth from Oraibi," *Journal of American Folklore* 36 (no. 139, 1923). See also for the migration of Hopis, Jesse Walter Fewkes, "Tusayan Migration Traditions," Bureau of American Ethnology, *Annual Report* 19 (Washington, D.C.: 1900).

4. For a listing of Hopi clans or phratry, see Mischa Titiev, *The Hopi Indians of Old Oraibi: Change and Continuity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), pp. 41, 49, 59, 63, 74–81, 86–87, 127, 226, 301.

5. Fred Eggan, *The Kinship System and Social Organization of the Western Pueblos* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950); Jesse Walter Fewkes, "The Kinship of the Tusayan Villages," *American Anthropologist* (o. s.) 12 (1910); and Robert H. Lowie, "Notes on Hopi Clans," *Anthropological Papers*, vol. 30 (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1929).

6. For discussion of a naming ceremony, see Don C. Talayesva, *Sun Chief: The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian,* Leo W. Simmons, ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1942).

7. Elsie Clews Parsons, *Pueblo Indian Religion,* 2 vols. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1939).

8. For more detailed information, see Lowie, "Hopi Clans;" Earle R. Forrest, *The Snake Dance of the Hopi Indians* (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1961).

9. See Lowie, "Hopi Clans;" Heinrich R. Voth, *The Mishongnovi Ceremonies of the Snake and Flute Fraternities,* Anthropological Series, no. *66* (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1901).

10. The Hopi language is classified with the Uto-Aztecan language group. For more information, see Benjamin Lee Whorf, "The Hopi Language, Toreva Dialect," in *Linguistic Structures of Native America,* Harry Hoijer, ed. (New York: Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology, no. 6), pp. 158–183; and Dell H. Hymes and W. E. Bittle, ed., *Studies in Southwestern Ethnolinguistics* (The Hague: Mouton).

11. For a discussion of the problems of teaching young adults the Hopi way, see generally Titiev, *Hopi of Old Oraibi,* and Laura Thompson, *Culture in Crisis: A Study of the Hopi Indians* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950).

12. Henry C. James, *Pages from Hopi History* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1974), pp. 201–214.

13. For a discussion of urban problems as they relate to the reservation community, see Shuichi Nagata's "The Reservation Community and the Urban Community: Hopi Indians of Moenkopi," in *The American Indian in Urban Society,* edited by Jack O. Waddell and O. Michael Watson (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), pp. 114–159; and Nagata, "Urbanization in a Reservation Community: The Hopi Indians of Moenkopi," in *American Indian Urbanization,* edited by Jack O. Waddell and O. Michael Watson (Lafayette, Indiana: Institute for the Study of Social Change, Purdue University, 1973), pp. 13–27.

14. For a discussion of game laws and their effect on Hopi ceremonial traditions, see Barton Wright, *Hopi Kachinas: The Complete Guide to Collecting Kachina Dolls* (Flagstaff: Northland Press, 1977), pp. 12–17.

15. For a more detailed discussion of the development of mineral resources on Hopi and other Indian lands, see Trevor Rees-Jones, "Problems in the Development of Mineral Resources on Indian Lands," *Rocky Mountain Mineral Law Institute Proceedings* 7 (1962): 661–705; Fred Harris and LaDonna Harris, "Indians, Coal, and the Big Sky," *Progressive* 38 (November 1974): 22–26; Suzanne Gordon, *Black Mesa: The Angel of Death* (New York: John Day Company, 1973); and W. R. Roberts, "New Hope for the Hopi," *Petroleum Today* 6 (Winter 1965): 9–14.